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Jones showing confidence in Ford as?Leader

By Bill Rea

Dufferin-Caledon MPP?Sylvia Jones admitted to being ?a little bit? surprised at the results of the weekend vote for the new leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative party, but she thinks Doug Ford is the one to lead.

Ford was declared Leader in a hotly contested contest over the weekend, but it wasn't until Sunday evening that his main rival, Christine Elliott, conceded the race.

Ford is a former Toronto City councillor. His late brother Rob served a term as mayor of Toronto.

There were concerns over the delay in getting the results announced.

?You knew it was going to be a lot tighter than even the pundits had suggested,? Jones commented Monday, adding many in the party were interested and engaged in making the right choice. She said she got that message from people who were not even members of the party, observing there was a desire among the public at they do it right.

Jones said she was impressed with the ability Ford has shown to reach beyond traditional Conservative voters. He did well in areas that normally don't vote PC, and seemed to connect with people who considered themselves disenfranchised.

Jones said Monday she had not spoken to Ford since his election as Leader.

She was speaking confidently about his ability to form a government after the June 7 election.

?I hope so,? she said. ?That's the plan.?

Jones added that all the candidates in the race have united behind Ford.

?I think that's important for the long-term health of our party,? she remarked.

?Doug's experience in government, business and his leadership in the community will get the province back on the path to prosperity,? Jones said in a statement issued by her office Monday. ?Doug has energized the PC party's grassroots based on a call for respect for taxpayers, and I am looking forward to working with him to defeat the Wynne Liberals.?

?I would like to thank the three other candidates for the PC Leadership for their work in growing our party and their efforts seeking the support of our membership,? she added. ?The last two months have been an intense and dramatic time for our party. During that time, I worked with our Interim Leader, Vic Fedeli, and my fellow Deputy Leader Steve Clark to ensure that the new leader would have the party turned over to them in the best possible shape.?

But not everyone was speaking as positively about the results.

?What's clear is that there is nothing progressive about the PC party,? Dufferin-Caledon Liberal candidate Bob Gordanier said in a statement he issued Tuesday. ?They are no longer pretending to be moderate; the Conservatives are fully committed to a right-wing agenda of cuts.?

Gordanier cited an article that appeared in McLean's, by independent economist Mike Moffat in which he determined that the Conservative cuts, will mean at least 40,000 fewer jobs in Ontario in the public sector, such as nurses, doctors, teachers, university professors, firefighters and more. He added economists at major banks have stated that the increase in minimum wage, which the Liberals have been promoting, will only help the economy.

?Ford wants to roll it back,? he observed. Does that mean a pay cut to our lowest paid workers??

He also said the PCs cannot deliver on their promises. He said that during the debates none of the candidates said they believe in climate change, and they are promoting scrapping the carbon tax. Gordanier argued they will have to make massive cuts to education and healthcare to pay for their promises.

?This not at all surprising,? he observed. ?This is what Conservatives do historically, they always make cuts.?

?Ford is on the extreme side of Conservatism,? he added. ?What will this do to our present thriving economy with the lowest unemployment levels in 17 years in Ontario, and one of the highest GDP rates in the G7 countries??

Andrew Nowell, Trillium Party candidate in Dufferin-Caledon, didn't express much confidence in Ford either.

?He's got a lot on his plate,? he commented.

?I just see that there's so much messed up with the PC?party,? he added, commenting he doesn't know if they can recover.

Nowell added this might offer a chance for Trillium to become better known.

?It's going to be an interesting next few months,? he remarked.

Green Party candidate Laura Campbell thought Ford's election reflects the frustration Ontarians feel toward the Wynne government.

?His brand of populism is trendy right now,? she observed, adding it shows people are ready for change.

Campbell said she's worried about Ford's perspective on the environment, as well as what he's planning to do without talking about government revenues.

?So far, he hasn't actually proposed any concrete ideas,? she commented.
?I'm curious to see how he thinks he can fix the deficit,? she added, noting it's a huge problem that will need all the parties working together to solve it.